

## **Photo Radar**

May, 1996

Prepared For

American Traffic Systems  
Scottsdale, Arizona

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## INTRODUCTION

This study was commissioned by American Traffic Systems of Scottsdale, Arizona and completed by the Behavior Research Center. The study was independently designed and implemented by the Behavior Research Center between May 17 and May 20, 1996.

A total of 405 randomly selected adults residing within the corporate boundaries of Scottsdale were interviewed by telephone. To qualify for the study, respondents also had to have a driver's license.

The purpose of this study was to measure public opinion in Scottsdale regarding traffic safety issues, awareness of the so-called "photo radar" traffic law enforcement program, and attitudes toward it and its impact on traffic safety. Additionally, drivers were queried about their own driving behavior when in Paradise Valley.

All of the questions asked in this study are documented herein and the Behavior Research Center stands ready to provide additional input or interpretation if needed. The questionnaire utilized in this survey and a printout of the results are appended to this report.

*BEHAVIOR RESEARCH CENTER*  
May, 1996

## OVERVIEW AND CONSULTANT OPINION

Concerns about traffic safety and speeding are widespread in Scottsdale – generally over 80 percent classifying these as "serious" or "very serious" problems. Belief that stricter traffic law enforcement would reduce the number of speeders, drunk drivers, and red light runners registers among 70 to 80 percent of the public, and 62 percent foresee a lower risk of being involved in a traffic accident with stricter law enforcement.

Awareness of "photo radar" is high (98%) and is supported by a majority of the driving public, as well as by nearly half of drivers who have received driving citations in the past five years. Sixty to 77 percent believe "photo radar" use in Scottsdale could help reduce speeding, red light running, and improve traffic safety.

An impressive finding in this survey is that a majority of drivers say that the presence of "photo radar" in Paradise Valley causes them to more carefully observe traffic speed limits and regulations when operating a vehicle in that community.

Finally, a majority of the driving public in Scottsdale support photo radar as a traffic safety program. And by a 56 to 36 percent ratio, drivers in Scottsdale regard "photo radar" as a "fair" way to identify and ticket drivers who break the speed laws in the community. Among drivers with an opinion, 61 percent consider the program "fair."

Overall, and considering that "photo radar" is a program that could result in the citing of any of the respondents in this survey, the broad support for the program is impressive. It traces, in no small measure, to widespread driver belief that their own safety is at risk because of those who violate traffic regulations, and their parallel belief that stricter enforcement is an effective deterrent to drivers who might otherwise violate traffic laws.

## PUBLIC EVALUATION OF TRAFFIC IN SCOTTSDALE

Eight of ten Scottsdale drivers rate the risk of being involved in a traffic accident in Scottsdale as "serious" or "very serious." Additionally, the proportion who rate as "very serious" the problems of drivers who run red lights or who exceed the speed limit, jumps to nearly 40 percent. A third think the drunk driver problem is "very serious" in Scottsdale, and three in ten hold a similar view about young drivers who are "reckless."

"As you know, Scottsdale has grown rapidly in the past few decades and this has resulted in a growth in automobile and truck traffic in the community. In general, would you say each of the following are very serious, serious, or not serious problems in Scottsdale these days?"

	Very Serious	Serious	Total
Drivers who exceed the speed limit	39%	44%	83%
Risk of being involved in a traffic accident	18	64	82
Drivers who run red lights	39	39	78
Young people who drive recklessly	28	43	71
Drunk drivers	33	32	65

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## PERCEIVED IMPACT OF STRICTER TRAFFIC LAW ENFORCEMENT

Belief is widespread that stricter enforcement of Scottsdale traffic laws would help improve traffic safety. This is particularly true as regards reducing the frequency of red light runners and speeders in the community.

"In your opinion, would stricter enforcement of traffic laws in Scottsdale reduce or not reduce the following?"\*

|                                                             | Would<br>Reduce | Would<br>Not<br>Reduce | Unsure |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------|
| Cut down on red light runners                               | 81%             | 17%                    | 2%     |
| Cut down on the number of<br>speeders                       | 78              | 19                     | 3      |
| Reduce drunk driving                                        | 71              | 23                     | 6      |
| Reduce the risks of being<br>involved in a traffic accident | 62              | 32                     | 6      |

\*The "reckless young driver" question was awkwardly phrased making its interpretation difficult and was therefore, dropped from the study. Basically, however, 70 percent appear to believe that "stricter enforcement would encourage young drivers to be less reckless."

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## AWARENESS OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARD PHOTO RADAR

Ninety-eight percent of drivers surveyed in Scottsdale say they are aware of a traffic law enforcement program known as "photo radar" or "radar speed cameras." Among those aware of it, 55 percent say they support it, 39 percent are opposed, and six percent unsure.

Support is very strong among women (62%) but draws a more divided opinion among men (49% support to 46% opposed). Additionally, support is lower among people who have received traffic citations in the past five years, but approaches 60 percent among Scottsdale drivers who have not been cited for a traffic citation within that timeframe.

"In general, do you support or oppose this traffic safety program  
(photo radar/radar speed cameras)?"

	Support	Oppose	Unsure
Total	55%	39%	6%
Men	49	46	5
Women	62	32	6
Under 35	54	41	5
35 to 54	58	37	5
55 +	54	37	9
Ticketed in past 5 years	45	46	9
Not ticketed	58	36	6

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## PERCEIVED POTENTIAL IMPACT OF PHOTO RADAR IN SCOTTSDALE

Roughly three in ten Scottsdale drivers believe the use of "photo radar" in that city would have a major favorable impact on traffic safety and reduce the number of people who speed or run red lights. Similarly, belief that such a system would "slow down traffic in general" is widely held. Overall, 60 to 77 percent of drivers see positive outcomes from use of "photo radar" in Scottsdale.

"Do you think the 'photo radar' program could do a lot, some, or not much to..."

|                                                   | A<br>Lot | Some | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------|------|-------|
| Cut down speeding in the city                     | 32%      | 45%  | 77%   |
| Slow down traffic in general                      | 29       | 46   | 75    |
| Improve traffic safety in<br>Scottsdale           | 29       | 37   | 66    |
| Reduce the number of people<br>who run red lights | 31       | 29   | 60    |

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Interestingly, people who have received traffic citations in Paradise Valley in the past five years are far more likely than others to opine that "photo radar" will improve traffic safety.

WITH PHOTO RADAR TRAFFIC SAFETY WILL...	RECEIVED A TRAFFIC CITATION IN THE PAST 5 YEARS*:		
	In P.V.	In Scotts- dale	Not Cited
Improve a lot	57%	18%	28%
Improve some	33	31	38
Improve not much	10	51	32
Unsure	0	0	2
(BASE)	(5%)	(10%)	(79%)

\*Caution should be used in interpreting these numbers because they are based on small "N's."

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## BEHAVIOR IN PARADISE VALLEY

Fifty-two percent of Scottsdale drivers say they are more careful to observe speed limits and traffic regulations when driving in Paradise Valley than when driving in other cities that do not have photo radar. This response pattern is true across both genders and all age groups, and is true among over 80 percent of those ticketed in Paradise Valley. A third of those who say they oppose photo radar say they drive more carefully in Paradise Valley than in cities without photo radar.

"In your own case, would you say you are more careful to observe speed limits and traffic regulations when driving in Paradise Valley than when you are driving in other cities that do not have photo radar?"

|                                  | More<br>Careful | No<br>Differ-<br>ence | Not<br>Sure |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Total                            | 52%             | 46%                   | 2%          |
| Men                              | 51              | 46                    | 3           |
| Women                            | 53              | 46                    | 1           |
| Under 35                         | 52              | 46                    | 2           |
| 35 to 54                         | 55              | 43                    | 2           |
| 55 +                             | 45              | 52                    | 3           |
| <u>TICKETED PAST 5 YEARS IN:</u> |                 |                       |             |
| Scottsdale                       | 51              | 49                    | 0           |
| Paradise Valley                  | 81              | 19                    | 0           |
| Anywhere                         | 55              | 45                    | 0           |
| Nowhere                          | 51              | 46                    | 3           |

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## FAIRNESS

By a ratio of 56 percent to 36 percent, Scottsdale drivers say they believe "photo radar" is a fair way to identify and ticket drivers who break speed laws in their community. Nearly half of those who have received citations in the past five years call the "photo radar" system fair.

"In your opinion, is 'photo radar' a fair or not a fair way to identify and ticket drivers who break the speed laws in your community?"

	Fair	Not Fair	Unsure
Total	56%	36%	8%
Men	48	44	8
Women	64	29	7
Under 35	56	38	6
35 to 54	55	38	7
55 +	57	32	11
<u>TICKET IN PAST 5 YEARS?</u>			
Yes	47	48	5
No	58	33	9

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## PROFILE OF CITED DRIVERS

In this survey, 21 percent of drivers report having been cited for a traffic violation at least once during the past five years in Scottsdale, Phoenix, Paradise Valley, or in the Tempe/Mesa area. Additionally, of those saying they were cited in Paradise Valley, 86 percent were caught on the photo radar system rather than by an officer pulling them over and issuing a ticket directly.

"In the past five years, have you personally received a traffic citation while driving in any of the following areas?"

|                            | <u>% "YES"</u> |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| City of Scottsdale         | 10%            |
| City of Phoenix            | 6              |
| Paradise Valley            | 5              |
| Tempe or Mesa              | 4              |
| Any of these               | 21             |
| <u>IF PARADISE VALLEY:</u> |                |
| Ticket received based on:  |                |
| Photo radar                | 86%            |
| Being stopped by officer   | 14             |

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## APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire

Detailed Tables